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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAKU 000804

SIPDIS

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NOFORN

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/IR

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/01/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [IR](#) [AJ](#)
SUBJECT: AZERBAIJANI PRESIDENT SUPPORTS U.S. ANNOUNCEMENT
ON IRAN; MFA ISSUES STATEMENT

REF: STATE 87682

Classified By: CHARGE D'AFFAIRES JASON P. HYLAND PER 1.4 (B,D).

¶1. (C/NF) Charge d'Affaires met with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev June 1 to deliver reftel points on Iran. President Aliyev told Charge he would immediately instruct Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov to follow-up on our request that the GOAJ issue a public statement welcoming the initiative. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement the same day (see para 6).

¶2. (C/NF) Calling it a "wise" and a very important move by the U.S., Aliyev stated that Azerbaijan fully supported the U.S. decision to become a full party in the EU-3 negotiations with Iran if Iran met the conditions. He said that Azerbaijan is extremely concerned with Iran's nuclear program and considers it a matter of national security. Aliyev added that it is important that the U.S. be part of the negotiation process since it will create more opportunities for a peaceful resolution.

¶3. (C/NF) President Aliyev stated that he had raised Iran's nuclear program with the Iranian president during the Economic Cooperation Organization summit in Baku in early May. The Iranian president told Aliyev that Iran had "burned its bridges" (NOTE: Aliyev did not speculate on what exactly the Iranian President meant by this.) and that Iran would attack the place where any attack originated. Aliyev stated that he had also raised the issue with the President of Pakistan and the Prime Minister of Turkey, who were also concerned with Iran's nuclear ambitions. Aliyev said that Iran is not currently suffering from international isolation since it maintains political and economic relations with many Western countries, Russia, China and Southeast Asia, because of Iran's large oil and gas reserves and strategic geographic location. In addition, Iran maintains sophisticated defense capabilities that are a threat to countries that are not protected.

¶4. (C/NF) Aliyev told Charge that he had discussed Iran's nuclear program with French President Chirac during his visit earlier this week to France, noting that the U.S. and EU were now together part of the negotiation process. Aliyev said that he shared U.S. concerns that Iran might use the discussions to gain more time to advance its program and that there needed to be clear evidence that Iran has completely stopped its program and that the negotiations had been successfully begun.

¶5. (C/NF) Regarding the recent "explosive" unrest in northern Iran by ethnic Azeri-Iranians, Aliyev told Charge that the GOAJ has purposely maintained a low-key approach and that officially it could not appear to be interfering in an

internal Iranian issue. He added that Azerbaijan did not want to give Iran an excuse to blame it for the protests. Aliyev noted that the protests had continued even after the Government of Iran had apologized and closed the newspaper that published the offending cartoon, indicating that the offensive cartoon had exposed deeper problems among Azeri-Iranians in Iran.

¶6. (C/NF) Aliyev recognized that within Azerbaijan there was a growing movement of political forces, public figures and writers that were actively discussing the Iranian protests. Aliyev remarked that when the World Azerbaijani Congress held meetings in Baku this spring, many participants made comments regarding Azerbaijan's ethnic ties to northern Iran. The comments caused the Iranian Ambassador to Azerbaijan, also an ethnic Azeri, to demand an apology -- which Aliyev said the GOAJ refused to do. He said the Iranian Ambassador eventually calmed down and was only looking for a reason to aggravate Azerbaijan-Iran relations. Aliyev concluded by saying that Azerbaijan was concerned with Iran's aggressive statements and policies but that Azerbaijan would not be frightened by Iran, noting that as a friend of the United States, "We will do what is necessary."

¶7. (U) Below is the statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the recent U.S. proposal and Azerbaijan's position on Iran's nuclear program.

Begin text.

We confirm, with regard to the ongoing discussions of the situation around the Iranian nuclear program, Azerbaijan's commitment to peaceful resolution of the issue, with an understanding that every UN member-state has a sovereign

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right to develop peaceful nuclear program in cooperation with the IAEA.

We welcome the recent U.S. proposal, which can create a good opportunity to find a diplomatic solution to the issue.

We underscore the necessity to strengthen the stability and security in the region of South Caucasus and the Caspian and urge all parties to abstain from confrontational moves and pursue constructive engagement.

June 01, 2006

End text.
HYLAND